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ABSTRACT

This report provides a snapshot of students in grades 7 and 8 of the former Toronto (Ontario, Canada) public schools as they were in 1997. The first survey of students in grades 7 and 8 was conducted in 1970, and surveys have been conducted periodically since then. The survey, which was completed by 7,081 students, 92% of all students in grades 7 and 8, focused on: (1) student characteristics; (2) students' feelings about their teachers and the curriculum; (3) students' involvement in out-of-class activities; (4) students' use of computers; (5) school awards; (6) future school and career plans; (7) self-ratings of various skills; and (8) parental involvement. Most (70%) of the students were Canadian-born, but 35% had other languages as their mother tongue, and nonwhite students made up almost half of the student population. Students came from a wide range of religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. Overall, students' perceptions about their schools, teachers, and the curriculum were positive. Most of the grade 7 and 8 students were involved in extracurricular activities, and more than half volunteered in school. About 60% of these students aspired to attend college. Most students rated themselves as good in social skills, but less than 40% considered themselves good at organizational skills. Three quarters of the students reported that their parents were involved in school activities. Information from this survey informs administrative and teaching staff about the needs of students and makes it possible to provide an inclusive learning environment for all the city's students. Two appendixes provide charts of student distribution by country of birth and religious cultural background. (Contains 5 tables, 26 figures, and 3 references.) (SLD)

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ED 424 277

The 1997 Grade 7/8 Every Student Survey:

Preliminary Findings

Maisy Cheng

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The 1997 Grade 7/8 Every Student Survey:

Preliminary Findings

June 1998

by
Maisy Cheng
Maria Yau

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The authors would also like to thank all the Grades 7 and 8 students who participated in the survey, and the school staff, principals and school superintendents who facilitated the data collection process.

Executive Summary

This report provides a snapshot of Grade 7/8 students enrolled in the former Toronto Board of Education in 1997. It informs administrative, teaching and support staff about the needs of the students. Such information is essential for ensuring an inclusive learning environment for all students to strive their best in school.

Characteristics of Grade 7 and 8 students

- Most (70%) of the students were Canadian-born.
- More than half (57%) spoke English or French as their first language, and 35% had other languages as mother tongue.
- Non-white students made up almost half (49%) of the student population.
- Almost half (47%) of the Grade 7/8 students identified themselves as having no religion. About one-third considered themselves as Christian (including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant), and about one-fifth as Buddhist, Moslem, Jewish or Hindu.
- The majority (73%) of Grade 7/8 students lived with two parents, but one-fifth (21%) resided with mother only.
- Students in Toronto came from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, with almost an equal representation from high, middle and low-income levels.

Students' feelings about school, their teachers and the curriculum

Overall, students' perceptions about their school, teachers and the curriculum were positive. The majority (over 60%) felt that:

- they belonged to their school; and extra help was available at school "all the time" or "often"
- "all" or "many" of their teachers showed respect for the students' racial/cultural/religious backgrounds and evaluated the students' work and tests fairly
- the achievements, contributions and experiences of Aboriginals, different racial groups and women were covered in the curriculum
- neither gender, race/culture/religion, disability nor cost was an obstacle to their full participation in school activities

Students' involvement in out-of-class activities

- More than half (58%) of the Grade 7/8 students volunteered in school, mostly as reading buddies. Outside of school, about a third (38%) had volunteered their help in community services (such as hospital and food bank volunteers), coaching sports and tutoring homework.
- Most of the Grade 7/8 students had involved in extracurricular activities in and out of school sometimes during the year, mostly in sports, music and arts.
- Grade 7/8 students tended to spend more time on leisure activities (13 hr/week) and television (13 hr/week) than on homework (9 hr/week).

- Almost 60% of the Grade 7/8 students sought help from their parents, a third from friends and a quarter from their siblings in doing their homework.

Students' use of computers

- Grade 7/8 from high income families were more likely to have home computers (91%) than their peers from low income families (58%-60%).
- The most common use of computers for Grade 7/8 students were for playing computer games (58%), followed by writing (46%) and information search (38%).

School awards

- More than half of the Grade 7/8 students had received awards in school and outside of school. The most common awards received were in sports.

Students' future school and career plans

- About sixty percent of Grade 7/8 students aspired to attend university. The percent of students who were not sure about their post-secondary school plans was 24%.
- The most common career aspirations for male Grade 7/8 students were basketball player and doctor. For female students, doctor and lawyer were the two most popular choices.

Students' self rating of various skills

- Most Grade 7/8 students rated themselves good in social skills but less than 40% felt the same way about their organizational skills. About three out of four of the Grade 7/8 students considered themselves comfortable or somewhat comfortable speaking up in class.

Parental involvement

- Three quarters of the Grades 7/8 reported their parents were involved in school activities on a frequent basis. The most common activities were teacher-parent interviews, music events and school open house.

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Introduction

History and Background

In 1970, the former Toronto Board of Education conducted its first Every Student Surveys on all students in both the elementary and secondary panels. The survey was requested by the Board's Special Committee re Educating New Canadians. Its purpose, apart from obtaining a description of the student population, was to ascertain whether students of all backgrounds had an equal access to various school programs regardless of their birthplace, home language and socio-economic class. Specifically, the question posed in the 1970 Survey was: "Do a disproportionate number of the children of poor people and immigrants go to special classes?" (Wright, 1970, p.1.)

Since then, the system-wide student survey was conducted periodically for the last twenty-five years. (See Cheng, et al.; Brown, et al.; 1992). Due to various logistic reasons, the surveys conducted between 1980 and 1991 covered only the secondary panel. However, after the release of the last (1991) Every Student Survey reports, renewed interest was expressed by different stakeholders to extend the survey to the elementary panel in order to get a more complete picture of the school system. It has also been held that it would be useful to identify the needs of the students at a younger age before they move on to their secondary education. Upon the request, in 1997, the elaborate student survey was extended to include Grade 7 and 8 students.[1] It was planned that other elementary grade levels would be phased in over time.

Purpose

The 1997 Grade 7/8 Every Student Survey attempts to:

- provide a comprehensive profile of the Grade 7/8 student population in the system; and
- identify the needs of students for effective programming.

Planning and Preparation

In the fall of 1996-97, a special work group was formed to develop a system-wide questionnaire based on various submissions made by Board committees, staff and community groups.[2] Different groups (such as the teacher federations) and staff members were invited for their feedback and suggestions.

The pilot versions of the Grade 7/8 survey were tried out in two Toronto elementary schools in December 1996. After further revisions, the questionnaire was finalized in April 1997. The survey contained two versions. All students were expected to fill out one version of the survey in class. Both versions shared 18 common questions pertaining to the students' socio-demographic backgrounds and their enrolment in special programs. The remaining questions that covered a variety of areas (such as students' attitudes, after-school activities and future plans) were unique to only one of the forms. The forms were translated into the five most frequently spoken languages for students who needed the translations.

A few weeks before the administration of the survey, the elementary school superintendents and principals were notified about the forthcoming survey, and were encouraged to inform parents about the event through the school newsletters or other means of communication.

---

[1] Only Grade 7 and 8 students were included because the available time and budget for the last school year did not allow a system-wide survey of all students.

[2] The 10-member work group composed of a senior superintendent, two principals, and staff members who work with the community, as well as staff from the Curriculum Division and the Equal Opportunity Office.

Data Collection Procedures

The survey forms were distributed to all elementary schools with Grades 7 and 8 in the former Toronto Board of Education in April 1997. A total of 7,081 completed forms were returned, which represented 92% of all Grade 7/8 students in the system.

Organization of the Results

This report will present an overall profile of the Grade 7/8 students in the former Toronto Board of Education. Specifically, it will highlight

- the students' social-demographic profiles
- students' perceptions about their school, their teachers and the curriculum
- students' involvement in out-of-class activities
- students' use of computers
- students' enrolment in special school programs
- types of school awards received by students
- students' future school and career plans
- students' self ratings of various skills
- parental involvement in school

Subsequent reports will present a more in-depth analysis of the Grade 7/8 survey data.

Findings

Part 1: Social-Demographic Profile of Toronto Grades 7 and 8 Students

Gender

- Grade 7/8 male students outnumbered their female counterparts (52% vs 48%).

Country of birth

- Most of the Grade 7/8 students (70%) were Canadian-born. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Place of Birth of Toronto Grade 7/8 Students, 1997

Region	1997
Canada	70%
Asia	16%
Europe	5%
Caribbean	3%
Africa	2%
Middle East	2%
South and Central America	2%

- Among the foreign-born, the largest group of immigrant students came from Asia, followed by those from Europe, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and South and Central America. See Appendix 1 for the countries of birth represented in each region.

- On average, Grade 7 and 8 immigrant students arrived in Canada at age 8. They had an average of 5 years of formal schooling and 4 years of English training before they came to Canada.

First Language

- More than half of Grade 7/8 students (57%) spoke one of Canada's official languages as mother tongue. (See Figure 1.)
- About a third (35%) of the students spoke a language other than English or French as their first language. Among these students, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Spanish and Tamil were the five most frequently spoken languages. (See Table 2.)

Figure 1: First Language of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997

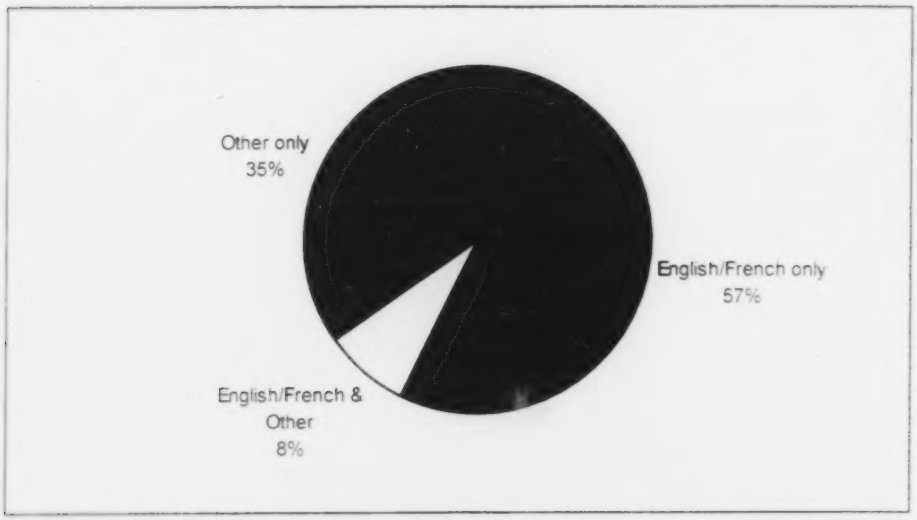


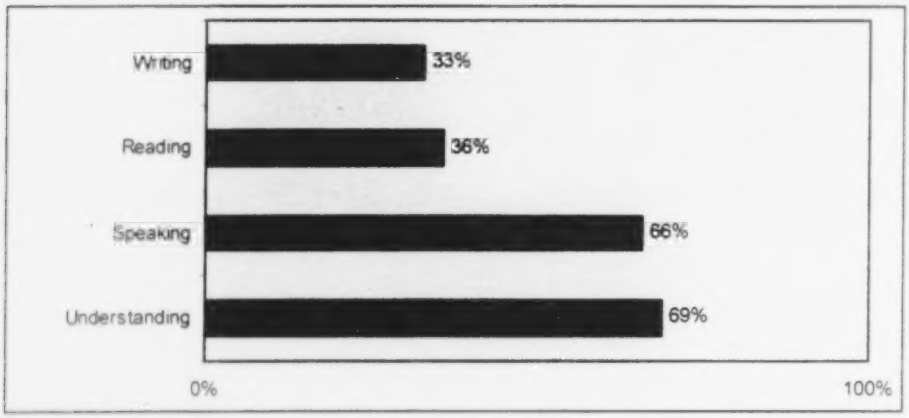
Table 2: The most common Mother Tongues other than English or French Spoken by Toronto Grade 7/8 Students, 1997[3]

Languages	1997
Chinese	15%
Vietnamese	5%
Portuguese	3%
Spanish	3%
Tamil	2%
Russian	1%
Greek	1%
Urdu	1%
Korean	1%

[3] Only languages which were spoken by at least 1% of the Grade 7/8 students were included in the table.

- About two-thirds of these students could understand and speak their mother tongues, but only about one-third could read and write in their first languages. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: First Languages Proficiency of Students other than English, 1997
(% of Grade 7/8 students with no difficulty in their first language in terms of:)



Racial ethnic backgrounds

- Approximately half of the Grade 7/8 students considered themselves as White, a third as Asian, and one-tenth as Black. The remaining 10% considered themselves as Aboriginal, Latin American, Middle Easterner, or bi-racial. (See Table 3.)

Table 3 :Racial Distribution of Toronto Grade 7/8 Students -- 1997

Racial/Cultural Groups	1997
White (e.g. British, Portuguese)	51%
East Asian (e.g. Chinese, Korean)	19%
South East Asian (e.g. Vietnamese)	6%
South Asian (e.g. Tamil, Indian)	5%
Black (e.g. Caribbean, Somali)	9%
Bi-racial/ Multi-racial	4%
Aboriginal	2%
Latin American	2%
Middle Eastern (e.g. Iranian, Turkish)	2%

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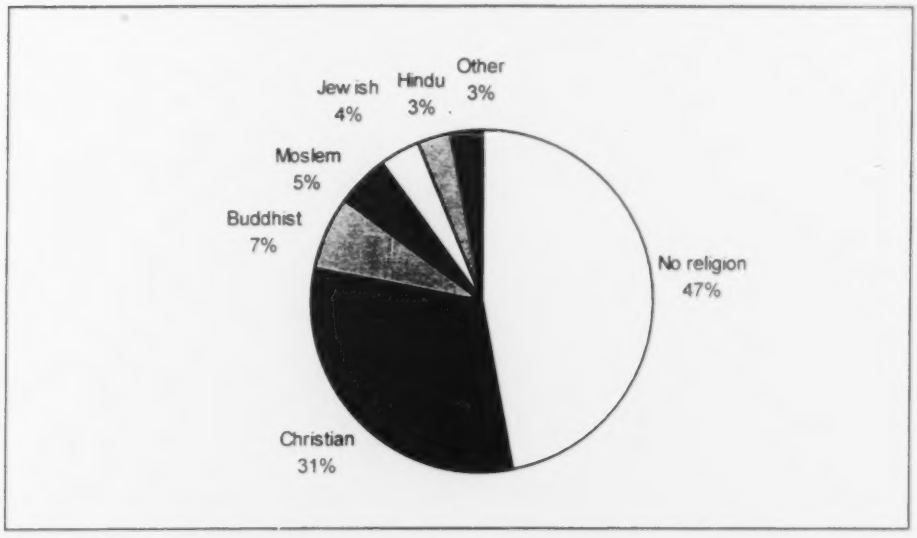
Religion

- Slightly less than half of the students indicated that they did not have a religion. Approximately one-third (31%) identified themselves as Christian (including Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant). About one-fifth considered themselves as Buddhist, Moslem, Jewish or Hindu. (See Figure 3.) See Appendix 2 for the cultural groups represented in each religion.

Figure 3: Religious Affiliation of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997



Disabilities

- About 5% of the students considered themselves to have a disability. The most frequent disabilities mentioned were learning, speaking/reading/writing and seeing. Less than 1% reported disabilities related to movement and mobility. (See Table 4.)

Table 4: Types of Disabilities of Grade 7/8 Students

Disabilities	1997
Learning	3.0%
Speaking/reading/writing	0.9%
Seeing	0.8%
Hearing	<0.5%
Medical/physical	<0.5%
Moving around/mobility	<0.5%
Attention deficit	<0.5%

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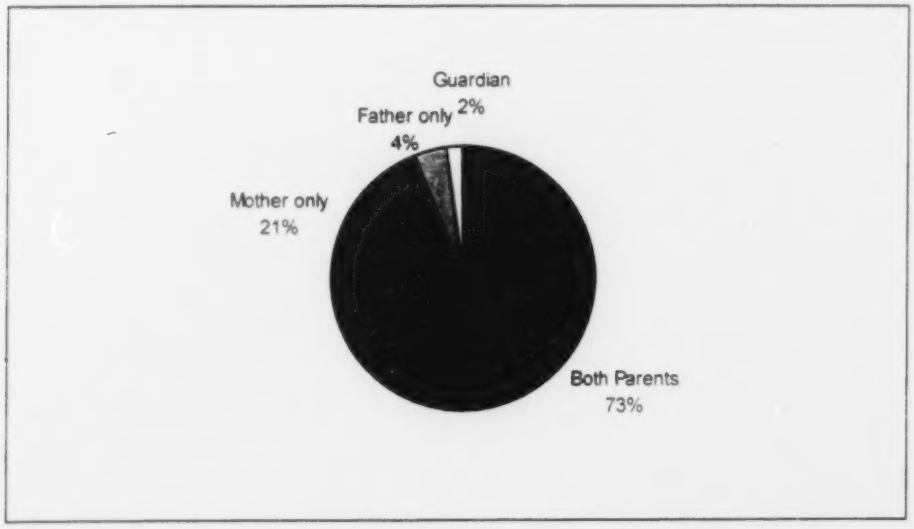
Parental presence

- About three-quarters of the students resided with their parents, one-fifth with mother only, and the remaining students lived with father only or with guardians/relatives. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4 : Parental Presence at Home for Grade 7/8 Students, 1997



- Students born in the Caribbean, Africa and South and Central America were less likely to live with two parents than students born in Canada or other parts of the world. (See Table 5.)

Table 5 :Parental Presence at Home by Birthplace of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997

Birthplace	Both Parents	Mother only	Father only	Guardian
Canada	74%	21%	3%	1%
Asia	76%	17%	4%	3%
Europe	76%	18%	4%	2%
Middle East	75%	22%	3%	1%
South & Central America	69%	20%	6%	6%
Africa	60%	28%	5%	7%
Caribbean	59%	32%	4%	5%
OVERALL	**73%**	**21%**	**4%**	**2%**

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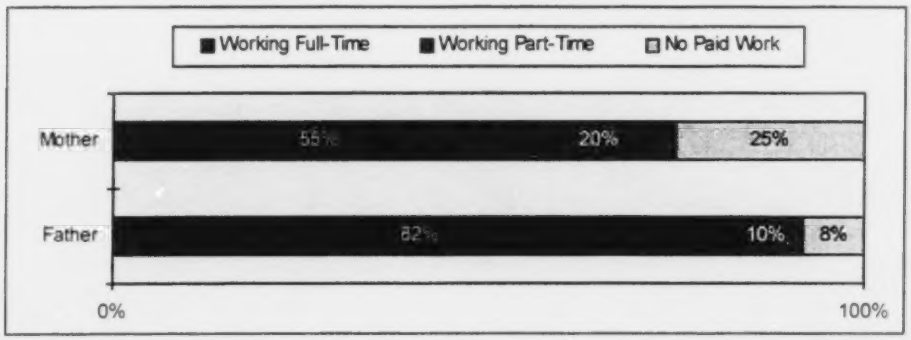
Parents' employment status

- The majority of the fathers (82%) and about half (55%) of the mothers worked full-time. The percent of fathers who were unemployed, retired, or full-time students was 8%. The corresponding percent for mothers was 25%. (See Figure 5.)

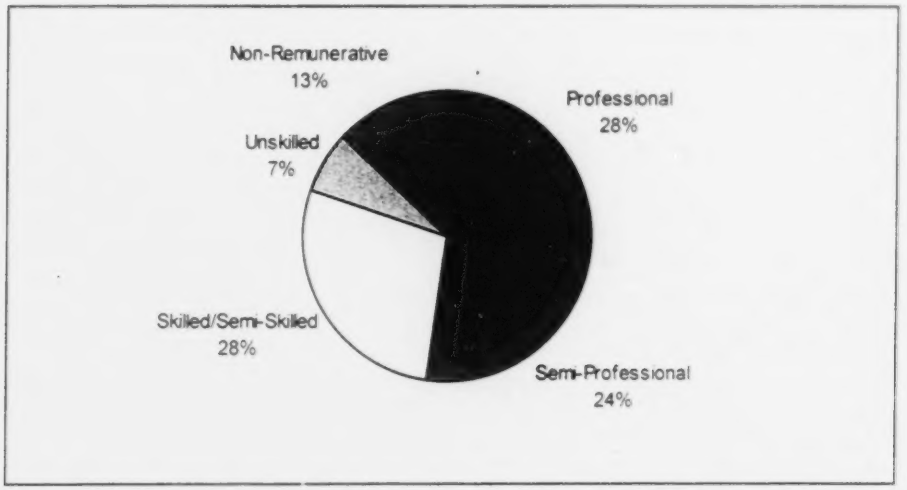
Figure 5 : Employment Status of Parents of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997



Parents' occupation

- The percentages of students who reported their parents' work as professional, semi-professional, or skilled/semi-skilled were about a quarter for each category.[4] The remaining quarter reported that their parents held unskilled job or were unemployed.[5] (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6: Occupations of Parents of Grades 7/8 Students, 1997



[4]About 20% of the students did not know their parents' occupations or provided incomplete information. The percent breakdown on parents' occupation in the above figure was based on only students who reported their parents' occupation. Parents' occupations were classified under a modified scheme of the Pineo-Porter-McRoberts scale. Some common examples of occupations for each category were: 1) Professional/high management - school teachers, accountants, engineers, lawyers, social workers, bank presidents; 2) semi-professional/technical/middle management -- office managers, computer programmers, nurses, restaurant owners; 3) skilled/semi-skilled - carpenters, auto-mechanics, office workers, salespersons, factory workers; 4) unskilled - waiters, caretakers, taxi drivers, domestic workers, baby-sitters. For more details, please refer to Appendix 8 of Research Report #191 (Cheng et. al., 1989). In the case of two-parent families, the higher SES of the two parents was considered; and in the case of single-parent families, the occupation of the parent with whom the student lived was used.

[5]Due to the high missing data (43%) for the parental education question, the authors decided not to report the findings for the question.

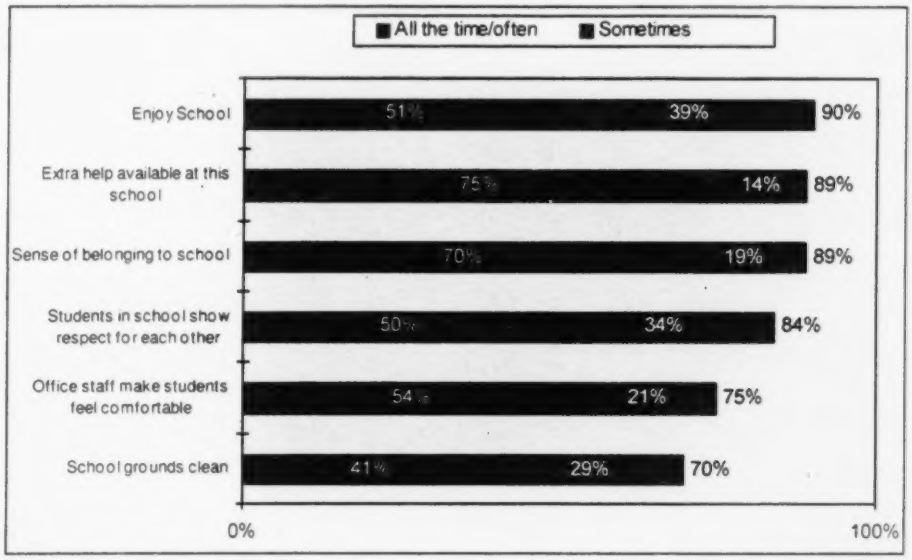
Part II: Students' Perceptions of School and Teachers

Students' perceptions of school

Grade 7/8 students were generally positive about their school. (See Figure 7.) Between half and three-quarters of the students reported that they 'all the time' or 'often' felt that:

- they enjoyed school
- extra help was available at school when they needed it
- they belonged to their school
- other students were respectful of their ideas
- the office staff was friendly

Figure 7 : Grade 7/8 Students' Perceptions of their School



Students' perceptions of teachers

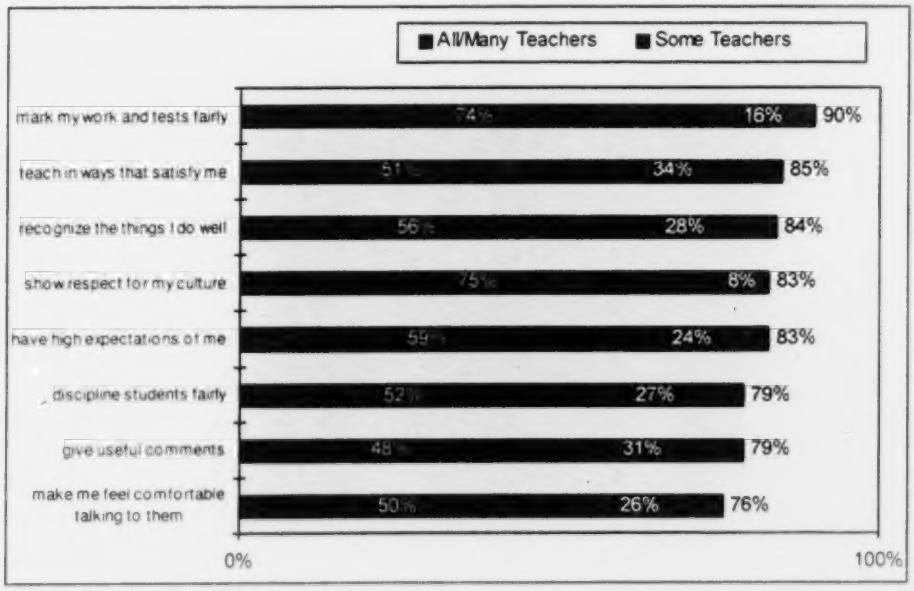
Grade 7/8 students' perceptions of their teachers were also positive. (See Figure 8.) About three-quarters of Grade 7/8 students agreed that 'all' or 'many' of their teachers:

- showed respect for and understanding of their racial/cultural backgrounds,
- marked their work and tests fairly.

Over half felt that 'all' or 'many' of their teachers

- had high expectations of students,
- recognized the things students did well in school,
- disciplined students fairly,
- taught satisfactorily and
- made the students feel comfortable talking to them.

Figure 8 : Grade 7/8 students' Perceptions of their Teachers
(% of students who agreed that their teachers treated them the following ways:)



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Students' perceptions of the curriculum

- More than half of the Grade 7/8 students reported that they had learned about the achievements, contributions and experiences of the Aboriginal, different cultural, racial and religious groups, women and working people in class. (See Figure 9.) Forty-one percent of the students also indicated that they had learned to recognize biases in their learning materials.

Figure 9: Grade 7/8 Students' Perceptions of the Curriculum
(% of students who thought they have learned the achievementsof the following groups in class:)

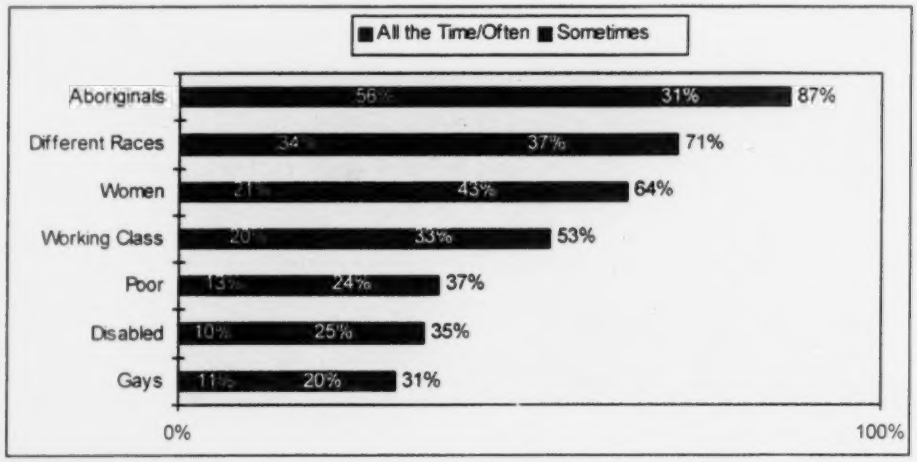
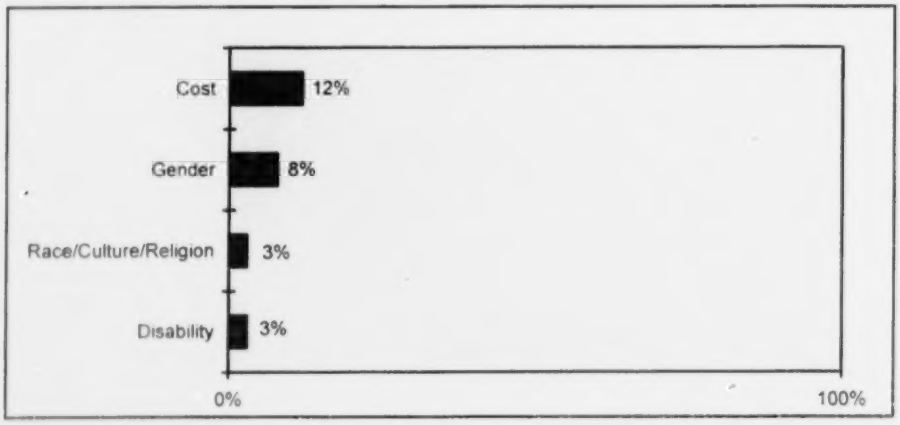


Figure 10: Students' Perceptions of Barriers to Participation in School Activities, 1997



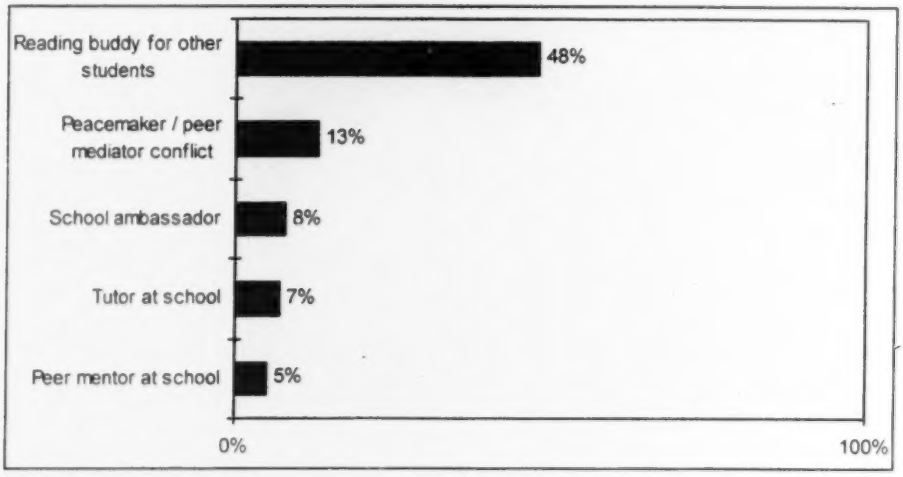
- A large majority of the students (over 88%) found neither cost nor their gender, culture/race/ religion or disability a barrier to their full participation in school activities.

Part III: Student Involvement in Out-of-Class Activities

Volunteer work in school and outside of school

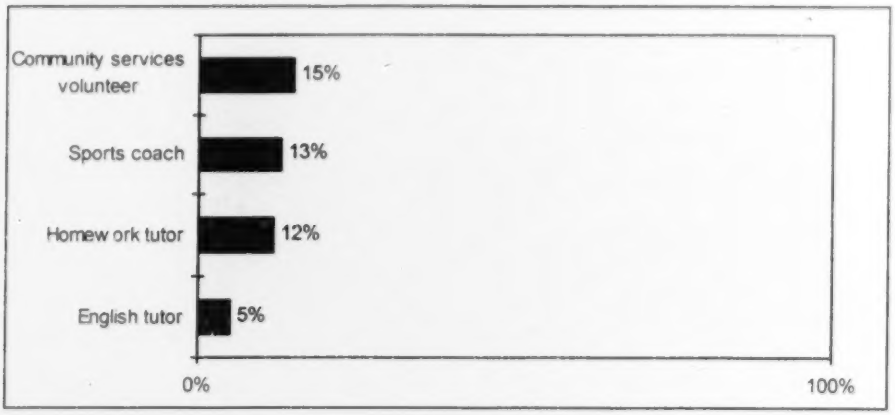
- More than half (58%) of Grade 7/8 students had volunteered as student helpers, such as reading buddies or peacemakers at school. (See Figure 11.)

Figure 11: Types of Volunteer Services Offered by Grade 7/8 Students in School, 1997 (% of all Grade 7/8 Students)



- Fewer students, about one-third (38%) had volunteered outside of school. Those who volunteered were usually involved in community services (such as hospital and food banks), coaching sports, and tutoring homework. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12: Types of Volunteer Services Offered by Grade 7/8 Students Outside of School, 1997 (% of all Grade 7/8 Students)



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Extracurricular activities

- The majority of Grade 7/8 students reported having participated in extracurricular activities at least sometimes during the year in school (83%). The corresponding percentage for student involvement outside of school was 80%. Sports, music and arts were the most common involvement for students both in and out of school. (See Figure 13 and Figure 14) However, it should be noted that students had many more opportunities to be involved in music and arts extracurricular activities in school than outside of school.

Figure 13: Participation of Grade 7/8 Students in School Extracurricular Activities, 1997 (% of all Grade 7/8 Students)

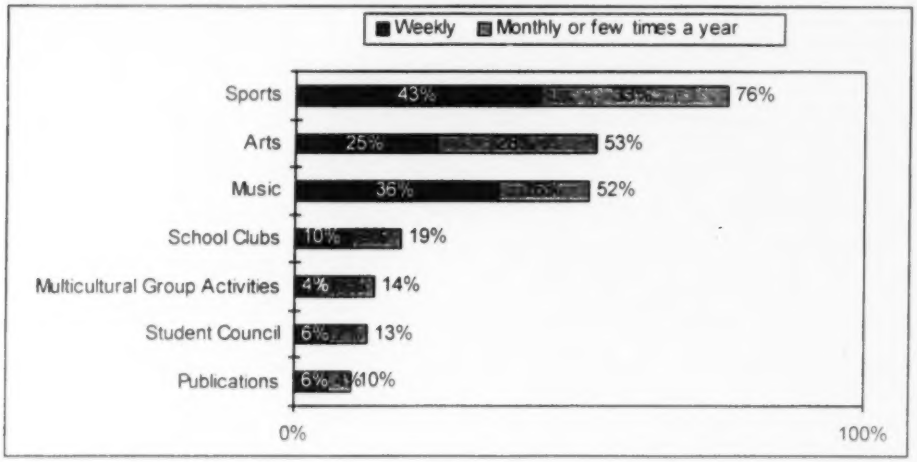
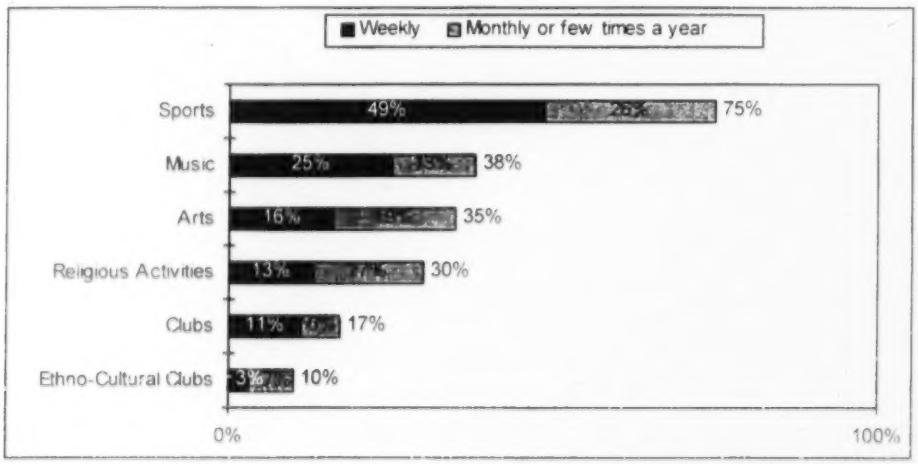


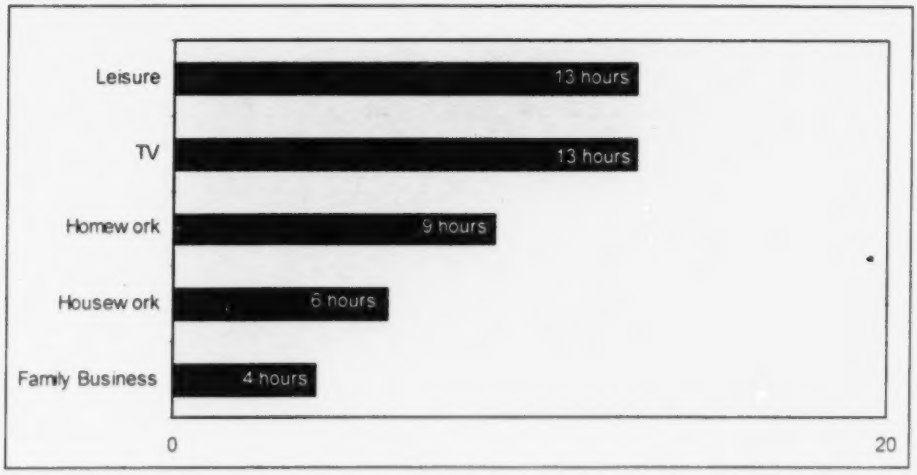
Figure 14: Participation of Grade 7/8 Students in Extracurricular Activities Outside of School, 1997 (% of all Grade 7/8 Students)



Amount of time students spent on after-school activities

- Grade 7/8 students spent more time on leisure activities[6] and television (average of 13 hours per week each) than on homework (9 hr.), housework (6 hr.)[7] or helping out with family business (4 hr.) (See Figure 15.)

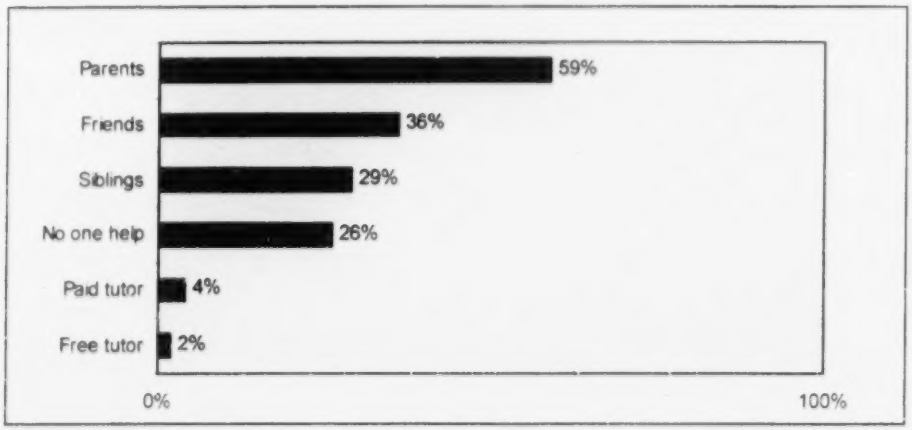
Figure 15: Average Hours Per Week Grade 7/8 Students Spent on Various Activities, 1997



Homework practices

- More than half of the students sought help from their parents, about one-third from their friends and a quarter from their siblings in doing homework. About a quarter did not need or receive help at all. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 16: Persons who Helped Grade 7/8 Students with Homework, 1997



[6] Examples of leisure activities included going to movies, talking on the phone, listening to music, going to the mall, dancing and reading.

[7] Examples of housework included baby-sitting, lawn mowing, cooking, snow removal, and laundry.

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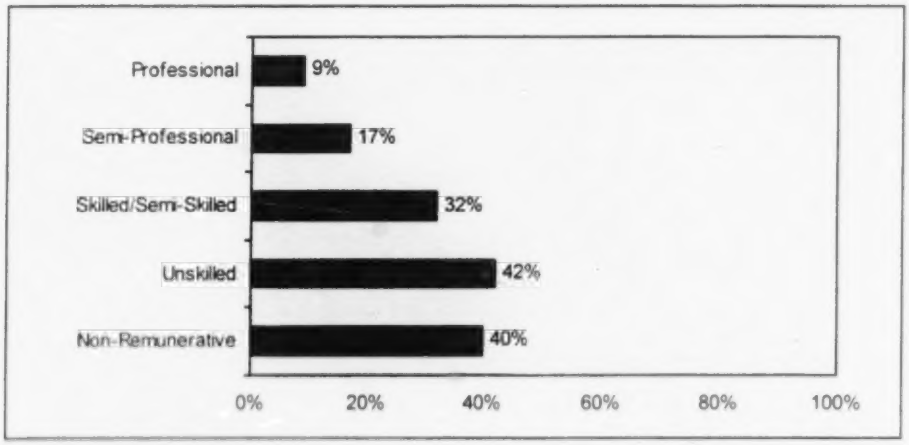
Part IV: Computer Use

Frequency and type of computer use

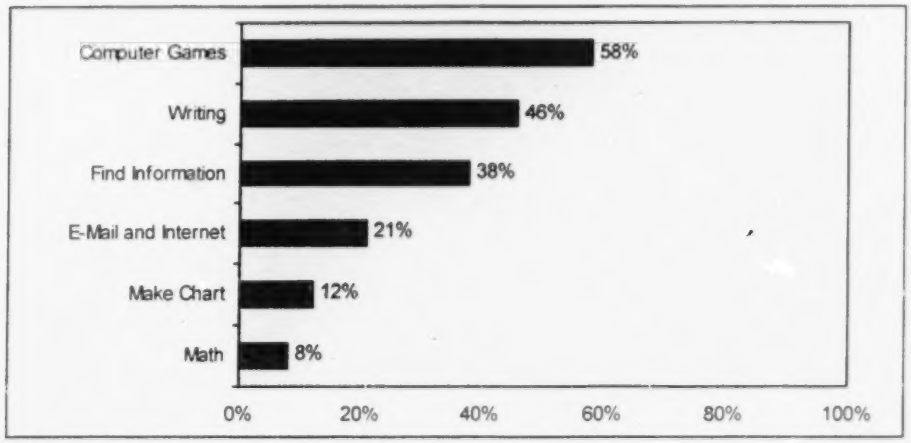
- About one in four (24%) of all Grade 7/8 students had little or no access to a home computer, but those coming from low socio-economic (SES) homes were more likely to have little or no access to a computer than those from the high SES homes (40% vs 9%). (See Figure 17.)

Figure 17: Availability of Home Computers by SES, 1997
(% of Grade 7/8 Students with little or no access to home computers)



- Grade 7/8 students reported using the computers mostly for games, followed by writing and finding information. (See Figure 18.)

Figure 18: Types of Computer Use for Grade 7/8 Students, 1997
(% of Students who did the following tasks daily or 1-2 times a week)

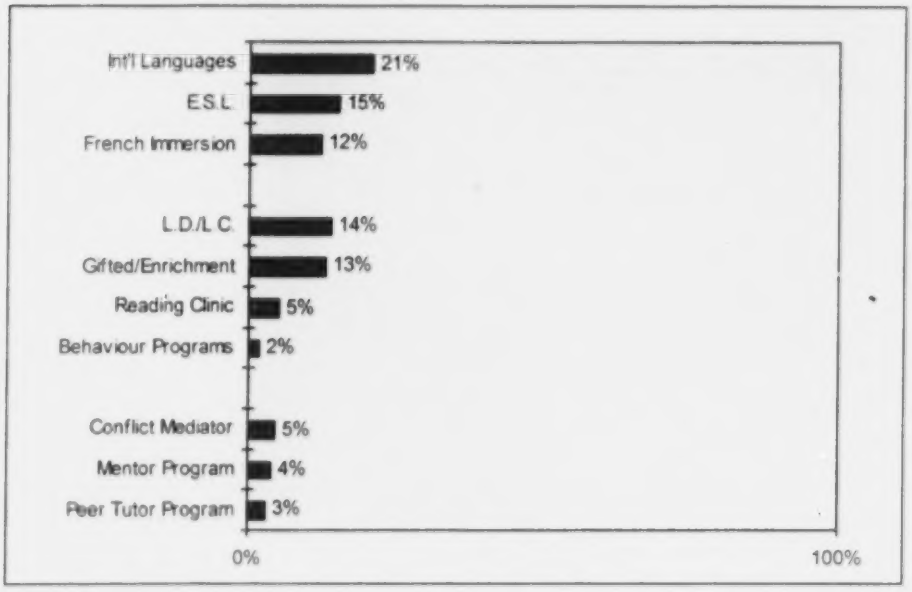


Part V: Other Findings about the Toronto Grade 7/8 Students

Student enrolment in various types of programs

- According to the survey, 1 in 5 of the Grade 7/8 students had taken part in International Languages. Other programs such as ESL, French Immersion, Learning Disabled/Learning Centre, and Gifted/Enrichment programs were each participated by over 10% of the students. (See Figure 19.)

Figure 19: Special Program Enrolment for Grade 7/8 Students, 1997



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Awards received by students in school and outside of school

- About two-thirds (65%) of the Grade 7/8 students had received school awards and about half (55%) had received out-of-school awards. The most common awards received were related to sports in both cases. (See Figure 20 and Figure 21.)

Figure 20: Awards Received by Grade 7/8 Students in School, 1997
(% of all Grade 7/8 Students)

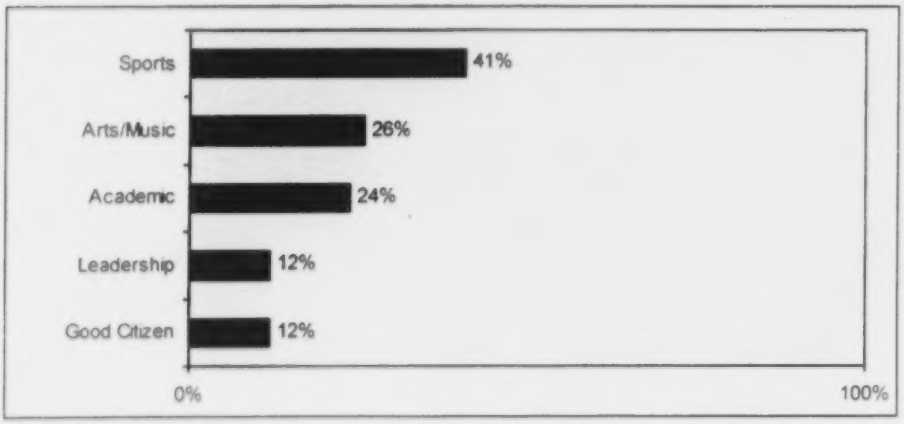
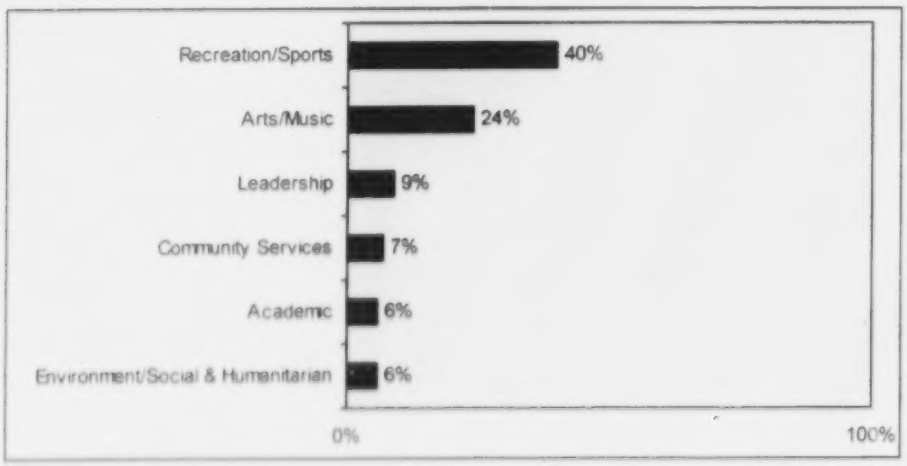


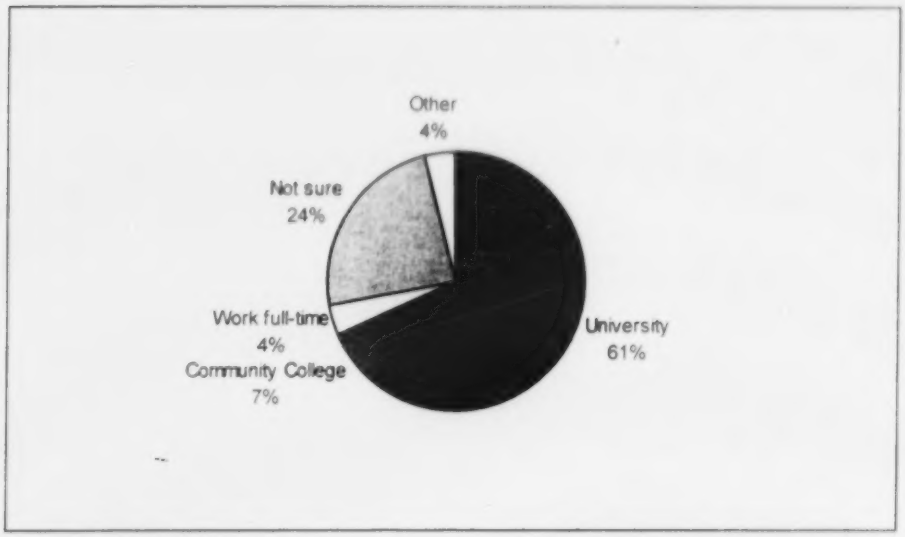
Figure 21: Awards Received by Grade 7/8 Students Outside of School, 1997
(% of all Grade 7/8 Students)



Students' future school and career plans

- Over 60% of the students aspired to attend university, and about a quarter were not sure about their post-secondary school plans. (See Figure 22.)

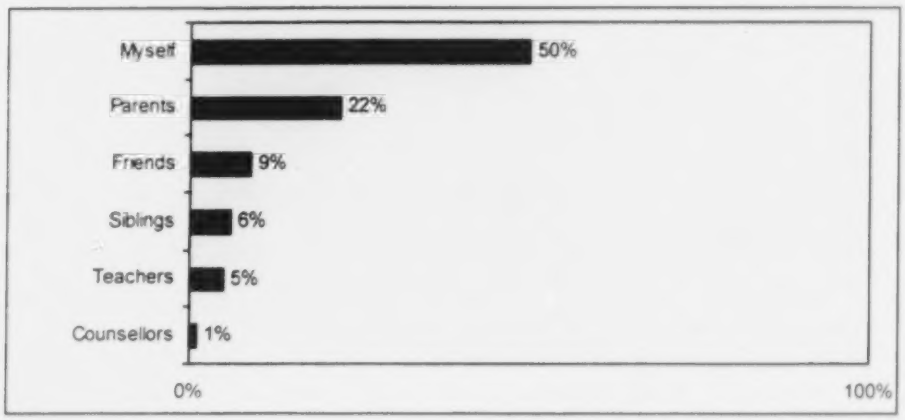
Figure 22: Post Secondary School Plans of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997



- The top five career aspirations of Grade 7/8 male students were basketball player, doctor, lawyer, computer programmer/analyst, and engineer. For female students, the top five choices were doctor, lawyer, movie star, teacher and veterinarian.

- Grade 7/8 students tended to claim that the ideas for their career aspirations came from themselves, family members or friends, rather than from school staff.

Figure 23 : Sources of Help for Grade 7/8 Students Regarding Future Career Decisions, 1997



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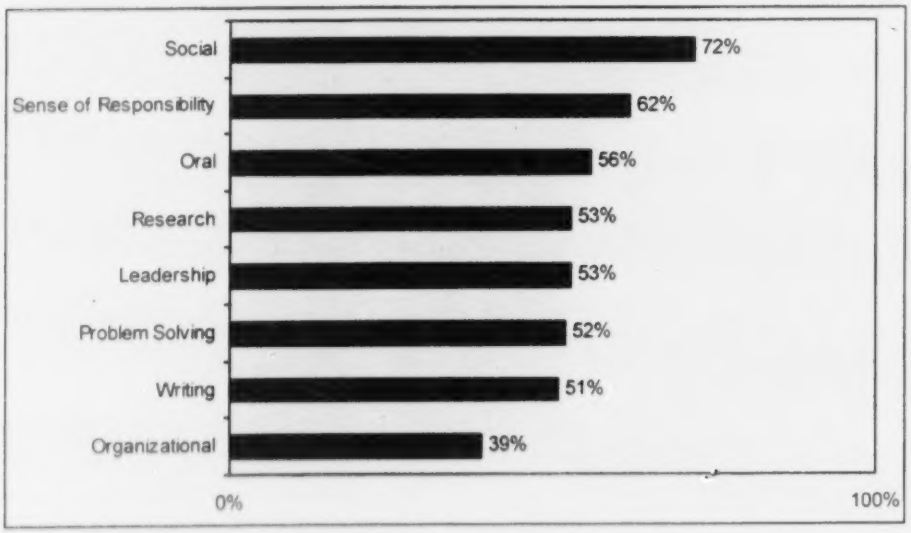
Students' self-assessment of their various skills

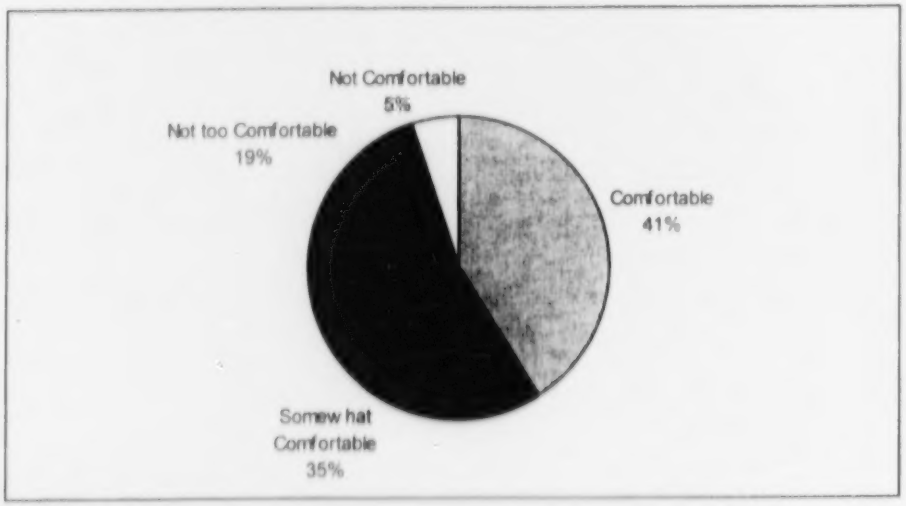
- The majority of the students felt that they were "very good" or "good" with their social, oral, research, leadership, problem solving and writing skills, and sense of responsibility. However, only about a third assessed their organizational skill as "good" or "very good". (See Figure 24.)

Figure 24: Students' Self Evaluation of Skills, 1997
(% of Grade 7/8 Students who rated themselves "very good" or "good")



- The majority also felt comfortable or somewhat comfortable speaking up in class. (See Figure 25.)

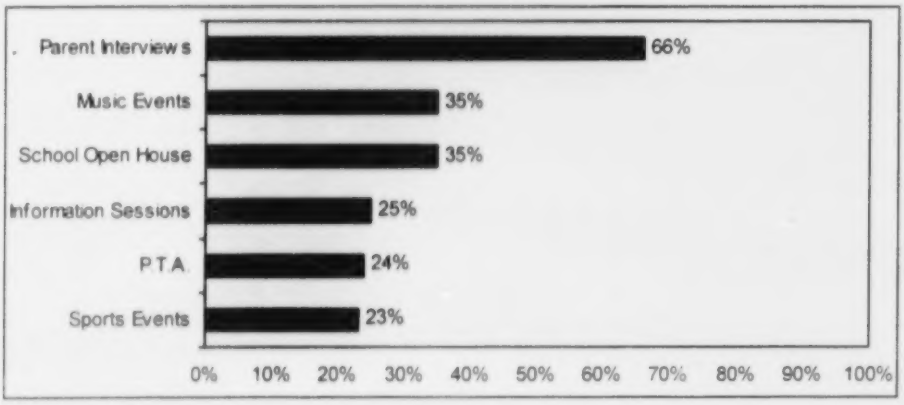
Figure 25: Grade 7/8 Students' Level of Comfort in Speaking up in Class, 1997



Parental involvement

- Three-quarters (75%) of Grade 7/8 students reported that their parents had been actively involved in their school activities. The major activities involved parent-teacher interviews (66%), school open house (35%), and music events (35%). (See Figure 26.)

Figure 26: Parental Involvement of Grade 7/8 Students, 1997
(% of Students whose Parents participated in various School Activities "all the time/often")



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Appendix 1

Distribution of Grade 7/8 Students by Country of Birth in each Region

Region	Countries	% of students born in each region
Asia	China	31%
	Vietnam	23%
	Sri Lanka	12%
	Hong Kong	9%
	Pakistan	4%
	Korea	4%
	Philippines	4%
	Other	13%
	TOTAL	100%
Europe	Russia	15%
	Yugoslavia	13%
	Portugal/Azores	13%
	Poland	11%
	Ukraine	8%
	Romania	7%
	Bulgaria	5%
	United Kingdom	5%
	Other	23%
	TOTAL	100%
Caribbean	Trinidad/Tobago	45%
	Jamaica	40%
	Grenada	8%
	Other	7%
	TOTAL	100%
South & Central America	Guyana	29%
	El Salvador	8%
	Brazil	8%
	Guatemala	7%
	Chile	6%
	Venezuela	6%
	Ecuador	5%
	Peru	5%
	Nicaragua	4%
	Other	22%
	TOTAL	100%
Africa	Somalia	28%
	Ethiopia	15%
	Ghana	10%
	Nigeria	7%
	South Africa	7%
	Eritrea	5%
	Other	28%
	TOTAL	100%
Middle East	Iran	45%
	Turkey	21%
	Saudi-Arabia	13%
	United Arab Emirates	6%
	Israel	5%
	Other	10%
	TOTAL	100%

Appendix 2

Distribution of Grade 7/8 Students by Cultural Religious Backgrounds

Religion	Cultural Backgrounds	% of students in each religion
Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant)	British	37%
	Caribbean	12%
	Portuguese	9%
	Latin American/Spanish	5%
	Greek	5%
	Chinese	4%
	Korean	3%
	Other	25%
	TOTAL	100%
Buddhist	Chinese	68%
	Vietnamese	27%
	Other	5%
	TOTAL	100%
Moslem	Pakistani	17%
	Somali	13%
	Iranian/Persian	12%
	Bengali	10%
	Caribbean	7%
	East Indian	7%
	Turkish	6%
	Afghan	5%
	Other	23%
	TOTAL	100%
Jewish	Jewish	84%
	British	4%
	Multiracial/multicultural	3%
	Other	9%
	TOTAL	100%
Hindu	Tamil	49%
	East Indian	26%
	Caribbean	21%
	Other	4%
	TOTAL	100%

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